173 abruptly, as though he were somewhat provoked by this obstacle
647 to what he wants to do. At the same time the saddle is removed and the horse returned to the stables.

It should also be noted that every morning the pougtiéma (first wife) orders a basket and hamper to be filled with all the things needed for a journey, intending to accompany her husband to Là.

As soon as the Mogho Naba postpones his journey to the following day, the pougtiéma, duly warned, unpacks her basket.

Today, the breath of civilization has blown upon these ancient practices, and the present Mogho Naba merely sees his horse, which is walked up and down while he is receiving his ministers. The animal is at once taken back to the stables when the [62] king returns to his palace without having tried to mount it, much less having heard any entreaties from the Kamsaongo Naba.

Koaga Basgo

644 At sundown each day the Baloum Naba goes to the residence
789 of the Mogho Naba for the koaga. Only the Zusobin-Kassanga (chief eunuch) and the Sogon'kassanga (ranking servitor) assist at this performance. The koaga is a sort of earthenware basin into which is put a bit of fire and ... mystery. The head servitor places the koaga in the courtyard in front of the antechamber and blows on the fire, which quickly blazes up and then dies down. Meanwhile, the bendré (drummer) has been rubbing his hand back and forth over the waxed portion of the drumhead.

During the whole performance, no one is allowed either to enter or leave the house of the Mogho Naba. Anyone coming from
● [687] the outside is not allowed to pass through the courtyard during the proceedings and anyone caught watching the koaga basgo was severely punished by the lash or even executed. When the performance is over, the Zusoba and the Baloum Naba, each of whom was seated at a particular place, arise, then approach and greet each other, and wait to be served some dam before separating for the rest of the night. They sometimes also salute the Mogho Naba before returning to their quarters.

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to the Mogho Naba: "Since I have come to you, give the first rank to this man. I will show him what he must do to please you. He will be the Ouidi Naba."

A man from Tansobongo, having heard that the Ouidi Naba was living in the greatest ease, came to see him. He, too, was a handsome youth. He was presented to the Mogho Naba (Naba Oubri) by the Gounga Naba who proposed the young man's appointment as second minister, the Larrhallé Naba, and reserved for himself the post of third minister.

So it came about that the Gounga Naba is the emperor's third minister.

645 place where there were once many goumsé (gounga, silk-cotton tree); hence, his name.

[726] He is a brother-in-arms of the Tansoba and always accompanied him to war, where he chose death rather than defeat, especially if the Tansoba had been killed.

644 (d) Baloum Naba, the chief steward of the palace and chief servitor of the Mogho Naba. He never goes to war, but remains always at the side of the Mogho Naba. It is his duty to carry out

[781] [65] sacrifices, such as killing the chickens or livestock offered to the manes or to the spirits when such sacrifices are prescribed by the soothsayers or other charlatans for the health and well-being of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Kamsaogho Naba, formerly accompanied the Tansoba to

[839] war. The Kamsaogho Naba is a eunuch, and for this reason he is commonly called Mogho Naba na poug'tiéma, "first wife of the Mogho Naba."

Other personages (not ministers). (a) Samandé Naba, in charge of all of the people in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba and a brother-in-arms of the Larrhallé Naba.

644 (b) Poé Naba, formerly the confessor for the wives and pages
● 687 of the Mogho Naba. His duty, carried out by magical practices,
661 was to denounce those wives or persons guilty of treason or of

attempted adultery. This practice (poéré) found many victims, and its suppression by the French was a real service to the Mossi, who were formerly murdered for a trifle. An ogling glance at a chief's wife was punishable by death. A man who met one of the wives of the Mogho Naba on the road was executed along with the wife. If one met a napagha [royal wife], he left the path and took to the bush. The woman herself would run off and return to the road only when she was sure that the man was a long way off.

Such is naturally no longer the case, and the wives of the Mogho Naba on their way to the market at [66] Ouagadougou no longer expect not to be looked at or even jostled. I hasten to add, however, that the Mossi still retain great respect for them and will even swallow serious insults, such as tampiri, "bastard," from a napagha if they are so unlucky as to offend them.

(c) Daporé Naba, chief of the section of the free or house slaves. It was formerly the duty of the Daporé Naba and his followers to massacre any pages or other convicted persons whose execution had been ordered by the Mogho Naba.

(d) Bend'Naba, chief of the drummers of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Soré Naba (literally, "chief of the path"), the drummer who always accompanies the warriors and who, therefore, even in time of peace, is allotted a horse.

If the enemy appears to be winning during a battle, the Soré Naba kindles the courage of the warriors of the Mogho Naba and constantly asks for a head, m'data zougou. This means that he is asking each warrior to forget himself and to think only of victory. In order to have a victory, the enemy must suffer such losses that they decide either to retreat or to surrender. Thus, the expression m'data zougou implies ruthless slaughter.

(f) Tansoba or Tampsoba, the war chief. The Tansoba of the Mogho Naba lives in a small village, Moussa, in the province of the Baloum Naba.

[67] When there is friction between the Mogho Naba and one of his vassals and there seems to be no hope of agreement, the Mogho Naba sends to the Tansoba for logdo (warriors armed with arrows). The Tansoba at once proceeds to Ouagadougou and stops at Baoghin. The emperor assembles his ministers and the principal dignitaries of his court and says to them: "I never thought that chief X, to whom I myself gave the pougla (red fez) would dare to

oppose me. I therefore demand that his fez be returned to me." To take away the fez of a naba is to dethrone him and reduce him to the level of his subjects.

The court officials, including the Tansoba, at once send emissaries to the chief at fault, asking him to choose between suicide (some take a poison called sounadré, while others kill themselves with a poisoned arrow) and war with the Mogho Naba.

If the chief is not prepared for such a summons, he kills himself, and the envoys return with the news.

If, on the other hand, he declares that he wants pouwega, that is, war and a noble death, he sends back the representatives of the ministers. A few days later, with drums beating and the Tansoba, chief of the army, at its head, the whole warrior band appears before his walls.

The Tansoba sends the Samandé Naba to the chief to ask him to confirm his declaration of war. If the naba still wants war, he usually replies: "Ya yingri bala la ka sakénian."

The Tansoba withdraws, sending word to the chief [68] to expect him back on a stated day (seven or eight days later); this period of time will enable the chief to assemble his warriors also. When the day arrives, it is a merciless battle, a massacre.

Often the forces of the Mogho Naba are victorious, and in that event the slaves, livestock, and other property go to those who seized them. Only the corpses belong to the Tansoba.

If an arrow, even a poisoned one, wounds the Tansoba, he must under no circumstances pull it out. Indeed, he must often endure thirst and hunger, and it is only when he is at rest in an enclosed place that the arrows are removed from his body. It should be noted that since the Tansoba's costume is virtually covered with amulets and other charms, he is not very likely to be wounded seriously by an arrow. This is not, of course, to belittle his bravery and composure in the face of danger, since he is expected never to retreat and, if the enemy is victorious, often prefers to kill himself rather than to report a defeat to the Mogho Naba.

There are, in addition to the foregoing, a great many petty naba whose role is not clearly defined and of whom it seems needless to speak.

Respect Due the Home of the Naba

554 The kombéré is absolute master of his territory. His subjects must show him the same deference as he himself shows to the Mogho Naba.

However, even though he is not a noble, a minister of the emperor need not remove his cap to respond to the salute of a kombéré. On the contrary, the latter is required to humble himself, to give way before him just as he would before the Mogho Naba.

644 The nabiga (son of a naba), nakomsé (descendants of naba) and, still more, an ordinary Moaga are all categorically forbidden to wear their shoes or their caps at the court of the naba. The only exception to the rule is when the person is a Moslem convert, but even then he always leaves his shoes at the door. He may, however, wear his cap or turban. Shoes and headgear may be put on again only after the subject is 300 meters from the house of the naba. Sometimes, in places where custom is rigorously enforced, the person must be out of sight.

[687] Any infraction of these rules was punished severely by the lash and by confiscation of property by the samand'kamba of the naba [110] when the offender was not of the nobility, that is, was neither nabiga nor nakombga.

291 It is interesting to note that wearing the fez, originally one of the badges of chiefdom, was forbidden to the nabiga and all the more to the talga (ordinary Moaga). Today it is commonly worn by men and youths since European traders and shops have made common an article which was once very rare.

576 Shaking hands. One seldom sees a naba extend his hand to one
643 of his subjects or, more especially, to his brothers or fellow nobles (nakomsé).

There are two reasons for this prohibition: 1) the naba is supposed to maintain a certain distance between himself and his subjects, a normal practice; and 2) a superstitious belief has it that persons [154] harboring evil intentions toward the chief put magic powders on their hands to cause swellings which may develop into real abscesses.

644 595 foreigners who are being housed by the naba. [164]

644 595 Each sogoné or samanbiga chooses a mother from among the wives of the naba (only those in the first two sections).

357 608 He helps her to cultivate her plot of ground and receives in return a little food over and above the ration of sagbo given to the sogoné as a group.

At Nanore (1), for example, it was formerly the rule that

1. Canton in the administrative district of Koudougou.

when a woman brought some sagbo to her adopted son, she could not simply hand it to him. Instead, holes were dug in the courtyard of the naba, into which the woman put the sagbo and sauce. Then the young man came to eat the food, and later the woman came back for her bowls.

644 595 533 687 832 Finally, it is still forbidden for anyone to play a guitar when a napagha is passing by unless the player is the naba himself or someone called upon to play by the naba. It should be noted that the Moaga prefers the guitar for intimate occasions. Therefore, to play it when a napagha passes by is actually to court her.

The Pogsiouré, or the Recruitment of Sogoné and Saman'kamba

643 562 Aside from a few special cases limited by custom which we shall presently describe, the naba can never dispose of the daughters of his subjects, either to make them [165] his own wives or to bestow them on someone else, without the permission of the parents.

Pogsiouré comes from pog', the diminutive of pagha, "woman," and from siouré, diminutive of sioubo, "to give anticipating a profit."

562 431 643 As a result of family quarrels or even voluntarily, a Moaga "may give away his daughters and those of his brothers and close relatives to the naba." It is obvious that the naba cannot keep all of these girls, so he gives some of them to his brothers, his uncles, his sons, and even to ordinary Mossi who have done him a service.

In the same way -- and this is more frequent -- every sogoné (page) or samand'biga [singular of samand'kamba] (bodyguard or

687 631 Moulins adds, "Custom does not anticipate the possibility of a chief being, properly speaking, stripped of his rule. A naba who gives the sovereign reasons for complaint is summoned under a pretext of some sort and put to death without further ceremony at the close of the audience granted to him. If the chief, guessing at the true purpose of the Moro Naba's invitation, demurs at going, a column is sent into the region over which he rules with the mission of seizing him and taking him to the Moro Naba, who has him put to death by his pages."

622 Let us add that in the Mossi /language/ a village chief is called tengasoba or tenganaba, from tenga, "earth, place, spot" and by extension "village," and from naba or soba, "chief." There are also chiefs of quarters called sakanaba, sakasoba, or sakakasaman, from saka, "quarter," and naba, soba, or kasaman, "chief." Mossi villages are indeed divided into quarters located some 200, 300, 400, or 500 meters apart and consisting of several soukala which usually stand, as we know, 40 or 50 meters apart. When the head of a quarter dies, it is the oldest soukala chief in the quarter who replaces him.

565 Below the Moro Naba and the chiefs of provinces, cantons, and villages, there existed among the Mossi a true aristocracy, a genuine nobility, the nakomsé, or sons of chiefs. "They were granted," says Moulins, "important privileges. They had the right to loot passing caravans and to demand from the common natives gifts of cowries, livestock, grain, etc., which the latter could not deny them. They were forbidden to kill, but if they committed murder, instead of being put to death, they were merely put in irons for a short period of time. Furthermore, they were granted the privilege of being tried only by the Moro Naba, head of their house, for all their crimes and misdemeanors." They are all descended, or supposed to be descended, from Moro Naba Oubry, conqueror of Mossi territory.

565 171 The existence of this aristocracy among the Mossi must be carefully noted, for it distinguishes them sharply from the populations we have studied up to now, Bobo, Nounouma, Kassouna, Sissala, Dagari, etc. Nobles are not found often among the Blacks of West Africa, and they are found only among groups that are, or formerly

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957)1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

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696 all the chaos would come a new appreciation for the task of the chief, and a cessation of the grumbling that the chiefs were greedy.

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428 The Mossi interregnum also served another purpose. It gave the electors the opportunity to exhaust and redistribute much of the patri-
666 mony of the dead ruler, which was brought to them by his heirs who were trying to obtain the chieftainship through bribery. Sometimes, a candidate's ability to collect a great deal of goods with which to press his suit often revealed to the electors the strength of his following in the district or village, for had he been an unpopular man he would have had to use only his own resources.

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643 The Mossi electors were always concerned with the health and character of a potential chief, and turned down the most promising
175 candidates who were deficient in any of these qualities. For example, when Moro Naba Sanum died in 1890 without leaving a male heir, his younger brother, Bokary Koutou, was the strongest candidate for the *nam*. Yet he was passed over, at first, by the electors because of his reputation as a bandit and a rebel. We know from Captain Binger, a Frenchman who met Bokary in 1888, that this prince was indeed a bandit and a slave raider. But Binger, although deploring Bokary's conduct, exonerated him on the grounds that the Moro Naba had sent him into exile without any means of support. This was true, but the
[687] reason that Moro Naba Sanum did so was because Bokary had raised a rebellion against him as an attempt to obtain their father's position. Bokary was forbidden to appear in the capital; but when he heard that his brother Sanum was dead, he took a force of soldiers and hurried to Wagadougou fearing that an attempt would have been made to prevent his election. When he found that his fears were justified, he became
[669] desperate and secreted a force of Gurunsi warriors around the elector's meeting place, threatening to kill them if he was not named Moro Naba. They succumbed to his threat and he received the *nam*. During
643 the customary speech in which a new ruler chose his official name,
175 announced his program for the people and the country, or ridiculed his erstwhile competitors, Bokary Koutou said: "A hundred ghosts cannot frighten an elephant (Wobogo)," meaning that he was not afraid
648 of any of his enemies. He thereafter became known as Moro Naba
721 Wobogo, and he chose to live up to his boast when the French arrived
175 and asked him to sign a treaty of protection with them. He refused

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
Yatenga

tionally charged relationships would be such a serious breach of etiquette as to threaten permanent damage, if not actual dissolution, of the marriage relationship (Hammond 1959: 187; 1963: 21). Thus if he has been angered over his wife's frequent failure to prepare his food properly, or to present it to him before his kinsmen with a proper show of deference, he need not and should not reprimand her directly. He need only wait until she is visited by one of her younger sisters when he can call out:

> Eh! Here come women more worthless than my wife! What do you want here? Are you looking for *sacabo* (a millet cake)? Who eats well here? Do you want an old groundnut? No one here has tasted *sacabo* with sauce since your sister came to my house!

By expressing his resentment of his wife in this way the husband is able—indirectly—to communicate the cause of his displeasure, to elicit support for himself and social pressure against her, and to achieve harmlessly the reduction of his hostile feelings. All this he accomplishes without risking the sort of direct and angry confrontation which might have a permanently damaging effect on their relationship. The wife's younger sisters cannot take offense at this joking, and they can be relied upon to relay the husband's complaints to their sister—if, indeed, she does not herself overhear the joking exchange. Furthermore, since a wife's younger sisters are usually aware of the sources of her grievance with her husband, they can use the same means to communicate to him the reason for her resentment and consequent failure to perform her domestic tasks to his satisfaction.

Similarly, when a man's younger brothers come into the presence of his wife, she is expected to insult them in the same way—to deride with humor their appearance, their lack of energy, their skill at their work, or their intelligence. The expectation and acceptance of such joking provides her with an indirect means of criticizing her husband as well. By saving her grievances until she is in the company of her husband's younger siblings, she may, within the context of joking, pour out her resentment at the way she is treated, revealing succinctly the causes of her dissatisfaction. His brothers can be relied upon to relay to her husband what she has said, if he has not himself overheard the exchange. If he recognizes as valid the criticism implied by her joking remarks, he may correct those aspects of his behavior which are frustrating or unsatisfactory to her. Indeed, if the criticisms are justified, his kinsmen are likely to exert pressure on him to do so. The joking provides the woman with a means of channeling in a culturally acceptable manner the aggressive feelings generated by her frustrations. And her husband's younger brothers, by retorting with hostile banter of the same sort, can convey to her the dissatisfaction of both her husband and their other kinsmen with her comportment, thus providing her, too, with a chance to mend her ways.

By these means both marriage partners have an equal opportunity to evaluate the content of the other's criticism and, if necessary, to alter their behavior accordingly. Since this is achieved through joking, the result of such an exchange is the maintenance of communication, the exercise of a measure of social control, and the mutual reduction of frustration without the face-to-face conflict that might result in permanent damage to both the marriage relation-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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to render homage to the monarch. This attracted the attention of the Mogho Naba, who investigated the grievance of the district chief. If the provincial minister were found to be in serious error, he might be deposed and executed. The Ouidi Naba was theoretically exempt from such punishment, but it is doubtful that a strong monarch would have allowed even this official to cause trouble.

A provincial governor dissatisfied with a district chief under his charge could, under certain conditions, have him deposed and put to death. He achieved this by complaining to the monarch that the chief was either withholding tribute or misgoverning his people. In most cases, however, the minister could curb the district chief by hinting that his son would not receive a recommendation as successor to the nam of the district. This was usually enough to win the cooperation of the most recalcitrant chief, if only because his future status as the honored ancestor of a ruling local line would be jeopardized if he rebelled. These sanctions were thus sufficient to ensure satisfactory relations between the provincial ministers and their district chiefs, at least on the surface. This was to the advantage of both groups, since in the final analysis the failure of either to administer or rule well might result in the death penalty.

Many districts and villages in Ouagadougou were administered not by the provincial ministers but by officials directly responsible to the Mogho Naba. The districts in question were often ruled by close relatives of the Mogho Naba or by persons who had gained his good graces. The villages were often inhabited by slaves and governed by headmen who were themselves slaves. Like the other territories of the Mogho Naba, these districts and villages were not physically contiguous. The districts were mixed in with districts administered by the provincial ministers, and the villages stood within the territorial boundaries of district chiefs. Whenever the Mogho Naba wanted to communicate with a chief of such a village or district, he sent one of his retainers. The chiefs, in turn, used their own people to send messages and goods to Ouagadougou. The general administration of these districts and villages differed little from that of the territories administered by the provincial ministers. The main difference was that the Mogho Naba took a greater interest in their everyday affairs. This called for greater efficiency on the part of local officials; for they, like the other chiefs, faced the penalty of deposition and death for maladministration.

Of all Mossi officials, the district chiefs had the most difficult administrative task. They were in direct contact with the people, and thus ran a greater risk of being charged with misgovernment. Countless district chiefs were deposed and executed because they had allegedly disobeyed or rebelled

against the Mogho Naba. I say "allegedly" because it was never quite clear whether the district chief was at fault or whether the Mogho Naba wanted to replace him for dynastic reasons. For example, Tanga, a district chief, was accused by Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) of withholding tribute and of maladministration. The Ouidi Naba who administered Tanga's district advised him to prove his innocence by making a sacrifice on Naba Oubri's tomb, and then go to Ouagadougou and ask the Mogho Naba's forgiveness. Tanga agreed to do so. But it appears that the Mogho Naba, who wished to place his own father's brother in Tanga's place, did not want a reconciliation. He waged war on Tanga, and seized his relatives, retainers, and cattle. Tanga tried to regain his losses by appealing to his provincial minister, but the minister told him that the Mogho Naba had distributed the livestock and had sold the people to Hausa traders. Moreover, he informed Tanga that he could not help him because the Mogho Naba could do as he pleased. Tanga thereupon decided to take matters into his own hands. He successfully attacked the Mogho Naba's villages, and was still a rebel when the French arrived shortly afterward.[26]

Tanga's action was unusual, for district chiefs seldom risked rebelling against the Mogho Naba when accused of maladministration. In 1895, for example, Koabga, chief of Doulougou district in the province of the Gounga Naba, took poison rather than wage war when Mogho Naba Wobogo accused him of misgovernment. Usually, a district chief who disobeyed an order of the Mogho Naba was summoned to the capital to answer the charge of lese majesty. If he was found guilty, the ruler knocked the bonnet off his head, thus deposing him, and had him strangled. The Mossi seldom spilled royal blood. A district chief who refused to go to Ouagadougou could either kill himself (traditionally by taking arsenic) or resort to civil war.[27] If he chose suicide, he was given an honorable burial as though he had died naturally. If the Mogho Naba sent down an army, however, the offending chief was invariably killed. His compound was burned, his slaves and cattle were seized, and his allies and immediate relatives were compelled to flee. The strength of this tradition is borne out by Tanga's case. He had successfully resisted the attempts of two Mogho Nanamse to bring him to heel, and was still at large when the French conquered the country. But Ouidi Naba Koabga, who had deserted his sovereign and selected Kouka Koutou as Mogho Naba under French orders, had not forgiven Tanga. When the French asked him what additional steps they should take to pacify the country, he asked them to capture Tanga. The unfortunate district chief was captured, placed on an unsaddled colt, and taken to Ouagadougou, where he was ignominiously executed.[28]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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difficulty discharging these duties, for, nobles aside, the Mossi usually obeyed orders from their chiefs—a fact verified by most observers. At the same time, a district chief had to be temperate in his demands upon his villagers, and could not take advantage of his obligations to the Mogho Naba as a means of personal enrichment. Similarly, the district administrators could not seek personal gain either by augmenting the demands of the district chief or by withholding part of the goods and services rendered to him. District administrators who were found guilty of maladministration or embezzlement were executed, because activities of this kind could—and often did—jeopardize the life of the district chief.

The Mossi might complain among themselves about the administrative policies of their district chief, but they took no measures against him unless he was very cruel or exploitative. A district chief who by his disregard for the people's welfare was believed to have lost the ability to "command people" jeopardized not only his position but also his life. When the people were dissatisfied with a chief, they either boycotted him or deserted their villages and migrated to another district, thus "increasing the force" (nam) of the chief who gave them sanctuary. This placed the deserted chief in a rather difficult position. Mogho Nanamse are known to have ordered the execution of district chiefs and even autonomous Dimdamba who had lost their subjects through their own fault. In 1863, when Mogho Naba Sanum was informed that the ruler of Boussouma, Naba Zande, had been chased away by his subjects for administrative abuses and had fled to a Ouagadougou village, he had him captured and executed.[29] Thus, the threat that people might leave the district was often strong enough to ensure a just administration, because the district chiefs and officials depended upon the villagers not only for the economic support of the central administration but also for their livelihood and their lives.

Those district chiefs who supervised other district chiefs for the Mogho Naba did not interfere with the internal administration of the districts. The chiefs of the Vooko and Nobila districts, for instance, had administrators of their own to look after their villages. But they were responsible to the chief of Nobere district, not their respective provincial ministers, for their internal affairs. Moreover, they had to follow the Nobere chief when he went to Ouagadougou to pay homage and allegiance to the Mogho Naba. But aside from these prescriptions, the chiefs of these subordinate districts administered their territories in the same manner as the Nobere chief administered his own.

The Mossi village chief had no administrators of his own to help him with day-to-day affairs of his village. However, like the district chief, he

had a group of confidants who acted as an informal council. These men included senior members of his own lineage, elders from other local lineages, and personal friends. Again, like the confidants of the district chiefs, these men visited the village chief whenever they were not busy with their own affairs to talk to him about wives, crops, and village matters. Although protocol was at a minimum on this level, the chief had to maintain a high degree of decorum. As a member of the ruling lineage of the district, he had noble status and had to be treated accordingly. The non-noble village chief was also respected as a recipient of the nam. But all chiefs, whether nobles or commoners, were expected to lead exemplary lives lest the flaws in their characters as revealed by the intimacy of village life should weaken their prestige.

The village chief received his orders from the district chief through the administrator in charge of his village or through one of this official's servants. He, in turn, used his own sons or relatives to transmit messages to the heads of the saghse. If the message was extremely important, the village chief's messenger might be accompanied by the administrator's messenger or by the district chief's personal representatives. The saksobadamba then transmitted the order to the various compound heads. This hierarchy was always followed because, by following it, the officials knew who was responsible for disobeying or frustrating the wishes of the superior chiefs. As on the district level, the orders transmitted to the village and its sections dealt with such things as collecting tribute, picking fruits from the district chief's trees, allocating labor for the district chief or his personal retainers, transferring or summoning cases to the district court, procuring sacrificial animals for the local Tengsoba, and requesting soldiers. The village chief also sent his own messages to the saghse. These messages, however, dealt with such village matters as local sacrifices, quarrels, and court cases.

Misrule and maladministration by a village chief were punished either by the district chief or by the villagers. Like other Mossi rulers, the village chief could not be deposed and allowed to live. However, he had a better chance of fleeing and finding refuge in another district. His presence in a strange district did not challenge the authority of the local chief, and he had no opportunities to seize any of his host's villages. In fact, if the refugee was accompanied by a large number of his subjects, his host might even give him land on which to erect a new village. The proviso was, of course, that he should not "spoil" the district by causing trouble. If a village chief accused of maladministration was seized by the district chief before he could flee, he was invariably executed. If he was a commoner, he was decapitated or even stoned to death; if he was a nobleman, he was taken into the bush and strangled in secret by the district police.

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and strangled in secret by the district police. If a district chief hesitated to punish a village chief whose followers had complained, the aggrieved lineage or the entire village simply took its movable property and left. This sanction does not seem to have been applied often, but its threat was normally sufficient to curb the excesses of the worst village chief.

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The torture was seen as a punishment, and not as a form of ordeal to ascertain guilt or innocence. It was designed to cause the culprit as much suffering as possible before he died, and its harshness reflects the Mossi fear of witches and witchcraft. In one form of punishment called *ḳoudgilga*, the culprit was sent to the smith, who tortured him by placing hot iron balls in both his hands. He was then beaten to death. Another type of punishment called *swengalenga* was more painful. A pottery jar from which the bottom had been removed was heated in a fire. Then it was placed over the head of the convicted witch and allowed to burn its way down onto his shoulders. The culprit was subsequently killed. Sometimes a convicted witch was not killed; instead, a man was sent to Ouagadougou to be castrated and sold as a eunuch, and a woman was sold outside the country as a slave.

Gross disrespect toward the chief and crimes of lese majesty were uncommon among the Mossi. These crimes were usually committed by persons who came into close contact with the chief—nobles and court retainers—rather than by commoners, serfs, or slaves. The most common form of lese majesty was adultery with one of the district chief's wives. The penalty for this was death for both violators. Anyone who dared insult the district chief at court was seized and executed. The same fate awaited those who talked about him maliciously in public or threatened to stir a rebellion against him. If the culprits were commoners, they were executed; if they were nobles, they were strangled in secret or were forced to commit suicide.

The district chief was caught in a dilemma whenever nobles committed major crimes or unlawful acts. They could not be imprisoned, and only the Mogho Naba had the legal prerogative to execute them. When a noble committed a major crime such as treason or rebellion, he was sent to the capital to be executed by slaves, who strangled him with a piece of cotton cloth. However, no district chief could allow the nobles to commit crimes with impunity, secure in the knowledge that they could only be punished at Ouagadougou. If a nobleman subverted the chief's rule by repeated acts of cruelty and brigandage, he was executed, although illegally. The executioners were the Baglere Naba and the Dapore Naba. These two men secretly visited the condemned noble, taking with them a bundle as a present from the chief. This bundle contained a new white robe in which were secreted a chief's bonnet and a poisoned arrow. As soon as the noble saw the gift, he knew that he was being ordered to kill himself. If he attempted to raise an alarm or run away, he was instantly strangled and his body was discarded in the bush. If he accepted the sentence, he was allowed to have food prepared, to eat, and then to kill himself. The chief ordered an elaborate funeral for his kinsman as though he had died an ordinary death. Thus, he was able to observe all the proprieties while at the same

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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litigants when it would be heard. On the day set he took his charges to court, where they waited in the company of the litigants from other districts and from the wards of the capital itself.

The procedure of the Mogho Naba's court differed little from that of the district chief's court. When called upon, the litigant stated his case, called witnesses, and underwent cross-examination by his opponents and by ministers of the Mogho Naba. The litigants were not allowed to look at the Mogho Naba while they spoke, but had to kneel forward on the ground with their faces turned away from him. The Mogho Naba himself seldom looked at the litigants and rarely questioned them. When presented with a complex case, the Mogho Naba, like the district chief, retired with his councillors and canvassed their opinion in order "to ascertain whether or not their verdicts were similar to his own." Nevertheless, he could not follow their advice. He had to make up his own mind, and when he returned to court he rendered his verdict, which could not be appealed. If those who received an unfavorable verdict showed any displeasure, they were taken outside by the palace guards and executed.

The penalties imposed by the Ouagadougou court were usually more severe than those handed down at the district level. The main reason for this was that aside from cases involving residents of Ouagadougou, the lawsuits tried by the Mogho Naba were serious ones and often had been sent to him on appeal. Moreover, the Mogho Naba's court was alone empowered to impose the death penalty within the kingdom of Ouagadougou. It should be noted here once more that district chiefs often executed criminals. But it should also be reiterated that the Mogho Naba never surrendered his prerogative to the district chiefs. They simply usurped it, and if they used it judiciously they were not penalized.

Those nobles and commoners who were convicted for serious crimes at the monarch's court were killed by the royal executioners. Moreover, in contrast to the procedure at the district court, the criminal's property was often seized before his execution. The reason for this is not clear, but it was probably related to the lack of a personal relationship between the court and the relatives of the accused, which enabled the Mogho Naba to impose a harsher penalty. The district chief, it must be remembered, lived in close association with his people and was influenced in his behavior by social relationships. Interestingly enough, the Mogho Naba did not keep the goods seized, but allowed them to be distributed among his executioners.

Crimes against the person or office of the Mogho Naba were punished with greater severity than crimes against the district chief. Any man who was seen speaking to one of the ruler's wives and who did not happen to

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696 be related to her was tried and executed. In some cases, he was put to death
692 without a trial. Adultery with a royal wife was considered so reprehensible
634 that both adulterers were publicly beaten to death. Their bodies were
[687] denied burial and were thrown into the bush to be eaten by vultures. The
[684] Dapore Naba and the Baglere Naba seized and retained the man's property.

Men who committed treason against the Mogho Naba were usually
687 killed before they could be tried. Chiefs and nobles who were suspected of
643 treason and who consented to come to Ouagadougou for trial were deposed
692 and executed if found guilty. Those who were found innocent were released and sent back to their chiefly duties. The sole exception on record to this general rule was the case of Naba Yemde, a Dim of Boulsa province.
[669] He had fought and defeated the forces of Mogho Naba Sanum, and when the Mogho Naba sent a larger army and routed him, he was treacherously delivered to the monarch by another Dim. Sanum found Yemde innocent of treason, but had him executed because he had violated another rule: as the descendant of a Kourita, he had come face to face with the Mogho Naba, thus jeopardizing the monarch's life. This exception is always cited by the Mossi when the inevitability of execution for treason is brought up. Actually, a person accused of treason rarely went to court. He either took poison or died in battle against the royal forces. As a posthumous punishment, his compound was burned, his property seized, and his relatives and servants sold into slavery outside the country. Thus, the supreme penalty
[613] was not merely the death of a traitor but the permanent banishment of his entire lineage.